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Mobility and the Future of Travel



What is Mobility?

When we speak about mobility in travel and transportation circles, we're really talking about how anyone can move from one place to another.

At the heart of it, mobility asks, "How do we make sure people can move in the communities in which they live? How can we have freedom of movement between our homes, our children's kindergarten, our commute to work," etc.?

These questions involve more than just individuals and businesses. Governments need to be involved, too, because they need to make sure that across socio-economic layers, everyone has equal opportunity for mobility in their lives.

Mobility Today

In the context of transportation, mobility typically refers to our options for ground transportation since that's what makes up the majority of our day-to-day movement.

When we think about modern mobility, we often think about companies such as Uber and Lyft, the two big players that brought us into the current era. Their digital ride-share models inspired municipal bike share programs and startup e-scooter companies.

These "new mobility" examples layer upon our existing transportation infrastructure that includes our personal vehicles and public transit options. It even includes our physical capabilities, enabling choices as simple as walking.



Challenges of Car Ownership

Although we have more mobility options than we've ever had before, our society remains heavily reliant on car ownership, a fact that comes with a list of serious challenges to address.

The biggest share of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions — 29% — comes from transportation, and a huge share of that is from cars. On top of that, more than 35,000 Americans die on the road every year. Three times the number of people die in America each year from car crashes as compared to an average Western country.

That's not to say anything about growing traffic congestion, the opportunity costs of time spent in long commutes, or the individual and governmental costs associated with a reliance on a traditional car culture.

Owning a car is a very inefficient mode of mobility. The usage rate for a car is just 5%, which means that 95% of the time it sits empty. It's unwise as an asset and for the environment.



What If?

Most people see cities as having been built for cars first and pedestrians last. But what if we could build mobility systems so great that people stopped buying cars?

During the Covid-19 pandemic, New York City closed 83 miles of the city's roads to car traffic in favor of creating sprawling public spaces for pedestrians and cyclists. The initiative proved enormously popular; residents embraced the opportunity to spend more time outside.

Imagining the Future

Just a decade ago, most of the country hadn't caught onto the burgeoning sharing economy. But today, we can't imagine our lives without hailing a car from our mobile phones. And when was the last time you used a paper map versus pulling your travel options on Google Maps?

The key to public space utopias doesn't lie in the complete abandonment of cars. Rather, it hinges on rethinking what type of car we put on the road, and likely, in our full embrace of autonomous vehicles.

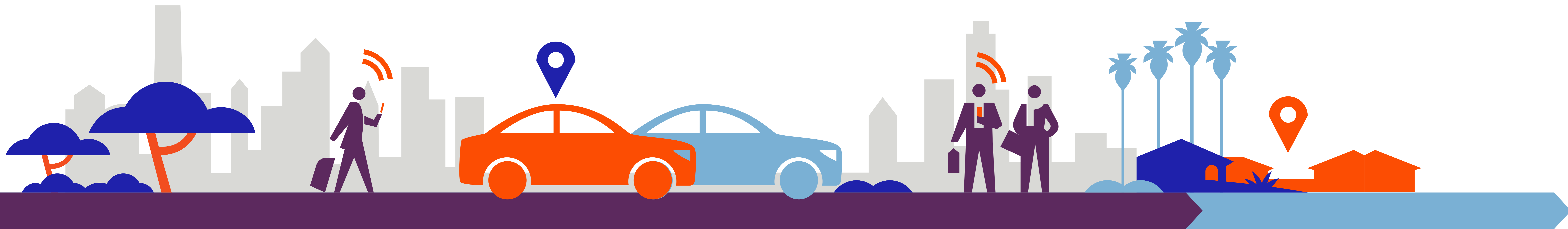
The Case for Autonomous Vehicles

It's interesting to imagine better mobility systems, but it gets exciting when they're autonomous. A 2015 report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development showed what might happen if an average, mid-size European city adopted self-driving cars, replacing all cars and bus traffic as they existed.

These autonomous vehicles would basically be efficient Ubers that don't need to park, don't need to rest, and never crash. They would also move packages and make deliveries. The study found they could remove 90% of all vehicles in the city and maintain the same level of mobility.

When there is less demand to move people and things around, these autonomous vehicles would simply leave the city to get charged and cleaned. And then they'd return with demand and get back to work.

Because there would be no cars parked in the city anymore, the equivalent of 210 football fields of space would be available to make into parks or schools. And local tailpipe emissions would end practically overnight since the entire fleet would be electric.



Corporate Travel and the Future of Mobility

We've been talking about mobility in terms of ground transportation, which pertains to corporate travel, too. That conversation centers on ride-hail and black car services that take travelers from door to door with the least amount of anxiety. There's a massive opportunity for evolution in this landscape.

The modes of transit are not inherently better but using them is easier. Most of us know how to book a car on our mobile phones — we share our destination, and the driver handles the rest. But the problems here are similar to the ones previously mentioned. Traffic congestion, road hazards and safety concerns, plus our carbon footprints, still come into play. And, for corporate travel programs, there's runaway spending caused by some 80% of travelers going off platform to book their cars.

People go rogue because very few options exist for new mobility in corporate travel. But that's our opportunity, which we at Deem think is extremely exciting. If we can help travelers identify the right mode for their ground transportation, and if we can consider their security level with a particular mode or the urgency of their timing, our technology becomes even more important.



Read the [report from IDC](#) on technology and the future of travel, and follow the [Deem blog](#) and social media pages to stay ahead of the changing mobility landscape.

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